

**The Urban College of Boston**

**Preliminary Follow-up Study:  
Urban College Graduates, 2001-2008**

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*It's a good beginning for adult people like me, and for moms. (Student #49)*

*"I knew what to expect; one-on-one with instructors was a great source of support." (Student #1)*

*"After I graduated I was ready. UCB gave me the ability to make room for improvement and I did so successfully." (Student #59)*

*"By taking Spanish courses in the beginning I was able to gain confidence and prepare myself to be a college student." (Student #36)*

*"Definitely [prepared], I was prepared educationally [for the next step] confident, and able to relate to all the students." (Student #4)*

*"All Three children have graduated from college, and tell me I was a great role model." (Student #30).*

*"UCB helped me reach my full potential. My mother and father lived to see me fulfill my greatest wish – an education." (Student #30)*

## Executive Summary

This report provides information on 64 of the 418 Urban College of Boston (UCB) graduates who obtained their Associate degrees between 2001 and 2008. The graduates primarily were interviewed by phone by Urban College faculty, staff and alumnae, using a questionnaire they had assisted in developing and testing. (See Appendix A, Research Methodology).

Almost of the graduates were women (97 percent) and 87 percent were people of color. While attending UCB the great majority of students had multiple additional responsibilities. Almost all had worked full-time while attending UCB (95 percent); three-quarters had parental responsibilities; almost a quarter had additional family obligations; and almost half of them were active volunteers in their communities.

Despite these multiple obligations, they persisted with their degrees. The average time taken to graduate was 5 years, with a range of 1-11 years. Almost two thirds of the graduates chose UCB for its location, affordability, faculty, and to boost their employment prospects. They were unanimous in thinking that their attendance at UCB had been a good decision, citing mainly the quality of teaching, tutoring, convenience, and their increase in self-confidence (67 percent).

Almost 70 percent had continued with their education, and several more planned to do so. Over 80 percent of those who continued their education attended Bachelor degree programs, and of these 17 percent had continued to a second degree.

Almost all UCB graduates are currently employed (98 percent), and almost all enjoy their work 'a lot' (87 percent). Almost all thought their efforts had positive effects on their children and that their efforts had paid off (98 percent). They cited a mix of personal and professional reasons for this response that included 'gaining knowledge', 'increased self-esteem', and 'improvements in pay and promotion' (83 percent).

## 1. Characteristics of Urban College of Boston Students

### Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

Almost all of the UCB students who were reached through this study are women (97 percent); and the great majority of students are people of color (87 percent); almost half of women are Latino or African American (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

<b>Table 1.</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	62	97
Male	2	3
<i>Total</i>	64	100
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic/Latina	17	27
African-American/Black	14	22
Caribbean	9	14
Haitian	8	13
Caucasian/White	8	13
Asian (Chinese/Vietnamese)	5	8
Other	3	5
<i>Total</i>	64	100

### Employment

Almost all of these students reported that they were employed while attending UCB (95 percent). Of these 46 percent worked 31-40 hours a week, another 46 percent worked more than forty hours a week; and 37 percent held two or more jobs (see Table 2).

<b>Table 2</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Employed While Student</b>		
Yes	61	95
No	3	5
<i>Total</i>	64	100
<b>Hours Worked per Week</b>		
Under 20 hours	1	2
20-30 hours	3	6
31-40 hours	23	46
Over 40 hours	23	46
<i>Total</i>	50	100
<b>Number of Jobs Held</b>		
1	33	63
2	15	28
3	5	9
<i>Total</i>	53	100

### Parental Responsibilities

Almost three-quarters had parental responsibilities while they attended UCB, with 60 percent having 1-2 children; and 40 percent having 3 or more children. Just over three quarters of the children were under 18 years (see Table 3).

<b>Table 3.</b> <b>Had Children While Student</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	47	73
No	17	27
<i>Total</i>	64	100

  

<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	8	17
2	20	43
<b>3</b>	9	19
4+	10	21
<i>Total</i>	47	100

  

<b>Age of Children</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Under 6 years	13	30
6-12 years	11	26
13-18 years	9	21
Over 18 years	10	23
<i>Total</i>	43	100

### Family and Community Responsibilities

Almost a quarter of the students assisted other family members, and almost half of them engaged in volunteer activities in their communities (churches, hospitals, and schools) in addition to their education and employment responsibilities (see Table 4).

<b>Table 4.</b> <b>Takes Care of Other Family</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	15	23
No	49	77
<i>Total</i>	64	100

  

<b>Undertakes Volunteer Work</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	30	48
No	32	52
<i>Total</i>	62	100

## 2. Urban College of Boston Education

### UCB Degrees

Almost 80 percent of students had graduated with an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education; 14 percent in Human Services, and 8 percent in General Studies; and of these just under 60 percent had previously obtained a Certificate at UCB (see Table 5 and Figure 2).

<b>Table 5.</b> <b>Type of UCB Degree</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Early Childhood	50	78
Human Services	9	14
General Studies	5	8
<i>Total</i>	64	100

<b>Previous UCB certificate</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	37	58
No	27	42
<i>Total</i>	64	100

### **Time Taken to Complete Degrees**

The mean time these students had taken to complete their degrees was 5 years, with a range of 1 to 11 years. Most of the students contacted (42 percent) had graduated in 2007 and 2008; just over 30 percent had graduated between 2004 and 2006; and a quarter had graduate between 2001 and 2003 (see Table 6 and Figure 3).

<b>Table 6.</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Time Taken to Graduate</b>		
1-2 Years	6	10
3-4 Years	25	40
5-6 Years	16	25
7-8 Years	9	14
9+ years	7	11
<b>Total</b>	63	100
<b>Date of UCB Graduation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
2001-2003	16	25
2004-2006	20	32
2007-2008	27	43
<i>Total</i>	63	100

### **The UCB Experience**

The graduates' primary reasons for *choosing* UCB were its location and cost (over 50 percent of responses). Additional factors included the Faculty, Job Requirement, Small Size, Students, and Courses Offered in other Languages. All the graduates considered it had been a good choice, and the main reasons they provided were the Teaching, Tutoring (38 percent), Gained Confidence (17 percent), Earned More and Got Promoted (17 percent). All students considered it had been a good decision (see Table 7, Figures 4, and 5).

<b>Table 7</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Reason UCB Chosen</b>		
Location	36	27
Cost	35	26
Faculty	18	13
Job Requirement	11	8
Students	8	6
Small Size	8	6
Courses	7	5
Languages	6	4
Convenient Time	5	4
<i>Total</i>	134*	100



<b>Good Decision to Attend</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	64	100
No	0	0
<i>Total</i>	64	100
<b>Reason good decision</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Teaching	37	26
Gained Confidence	25	17
Tutoring	17	12
Convenient Time	17	12
Earned More	13	9
Got Promoted	12	8
Learning	8	6
Students	6	4
Language	5	3
Location	4	3
Other	1	1
<b>Total</b>	145**	100

### **Preparation for Further Education**

Only one of the 47 graduates who continued with their education expressed some reservation about being prepared for the next step at a four-year institution. All the other graduates expressed a strong belief in their preparation. The reasons they provided included:

Having a sound learning base:

*“UCB provided me with a base to allow me to keep up with the academic requirements of my new program.”*

Having more confidence:

*“I have more confidence now than when I began UCB. Being successful has inspired me for the future.”*

Having tutoring assistance:

*“They helped by having tutoring...staff kept you motivated...helped me get into a studying habit.”*

Having instruction in languages other than English:

*“I was worried about my language but then I was ready.”*

## **3. Post-Urban College of Boston Education**

### **Continued to Four-Year College**

Forty four of the sixty four UCB graduates (69 percent) continued their education, and of these 83 percent went to a four year college for a Bachelor’s degree. The other 17 percent either went to technical schools or continued to take credit courses at UCB. All of them expressed that this was a good decision and that they felt prepared to

continue their education (see Table 8). Several graduates expressed a desire to continue their education but stated that either they could not afford to go, or preferred to wait awhile.

<b>Table 8.</b> <b>Continued Education</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	44	69
No	20	31
<i>Total</i>	64	100

  

<b>Degree</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
B.A./B.S.	35	83
Other	7	17
<i>Total</i>	44	100

  

<b>Felt Prepared</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	44	100
No	0	0
<i>Total</i>	44	100

### Colleges Attended

Half of the UCB graduates attended the University of Massachusetts Boston or Cambridge College; and almost a quarter attended Lesley or Springfield Colleges. Another 10 percent attended colleges in the Greater Boston area (see Table 9 and Figure 6).

<b>Table 9.</b> <b>Four Year Colleges</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
UMass Boston	11	26
Cambridge College	10	24
Lesley University	7	17
Springfield	3	7
Boston University	1	2
Endicott	1	2
Harvard Extension	1	2
Northeastern	1	2
Wentworth	1	2
Other	6	14
<i>Total</i>	42	100

### College Majors and Further Courses of Study

Almost a third of graduate took Human Services as a major; another third took Human Development, Early Childhood and Psychology, and the remainder took a variety of Human Service degrees. Six graduates had gone on to further degree courses; two to a Master's program at Simmons and Cambridge Colleges, University of Massachusetts Boston, and a Lincoln Technical Institute (see Table 10, and Figure 7).

<b>Table 10</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>College Major</b>		
Human Services	11	31
Human Development	4	11
Early Childhood	4	11
Psychology	4	11
Multidisciplinary	3	9
Education	3	9
Other	6	3
<i>Total</i>	35	100
<b>Second Degree</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
M.A./M.S.	2	33
Other	4	67
<i>Total</i>	6	100
<b>Schools Attended</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Cambridge College	2	33
Simmons College	1	17
UMass Boston	2	33
Lincoln Technology	1	17
<i>Total</i>	6	100

#### **Four-year College Compared with UCB**

Only a few graduates thought the work was harder at their four-year school (11 percent), and 30 percent found the work similar.

However, half the graduates found that these schools were less supportive than UCB had been (see Table 11).

*"It is similar, but not as much of a homelike atmosphere...more support at UCB."*

*"UCB is very close knit. You know the faculty, you know the students. UCB is home. At X you don't have a close relationship with faculty or students."*

*"At Y you are known only by numbers. At UCB you had a name and everyone was on a personal level."*

<b>Table 11</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Schools Compared to UCB</b>		
Less Supportive	19	51
Similar	11	30
Harder	7	19
<i>Total</i>	37	100

## **4. Effects of Urban College of Boston Education**

### **Current Employment**

Almost all UCB graduates were employed (98 percent); 87 percent of whom were working 30 or more hours. The majority of UCB graduates became teachers in childcare centers (40 percent); and several became self-employed childcare providers

(14 percent). Over a quarter achieved positions as lead teacher, assistant director and director (see Figure 8). Eighty-seven percent enjoyed their work “a lot” (see Table 12).

<b>Table 12.</b> <b>Hours Employed Per Week</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Under 20 hours	1	2
21-20 hours	7	11
31-40 hours	37	62
Over 40 hours	15	25
<i>Total</i>	60	100

  

<b>Employment</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Teachers	23	40
Self-Employed Childcare	8	14
Social Work/Case Managers	8	14
Lead Teacher	6	11
Health Services	5	9
Owner/Director Childcare	4	7
Other	3	5
<i>Total</i>	57	100

  

<b>Enjoys Work</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A lot	55	87
A little	8	13
Not at all	0	0
<i>Total</i>	63	100

**Effects on Children**

Almost of the graduates with children thought their educational efforts had affected their children (98 percent), and for all but two of the graduates these effects were very positive (see Table 13).

Some thought they became better parents and community members through their studies:

*“A lot of classes I took at UCB – especially the ECE – helped me take very good care of my children.*

*“ I can help them and understand them better.”*

*“I help them do their homework and read books to the younger one.”*

*“I was able to help them with their homework, talk to their teacher, and communicate with my neighbors.”*

Others talked very positively about the role models they became for their children, showing them how important education is, and how hard work is necessary to succeed:

*“I am their mentor; two have graduated from college, and one has just been accepted.”*

*"[I] Showed, no matter how old you are you can achieve your goal." My daughter went back to school and studies with me."*

<b>Table 13.</b> <b>Effects on Children</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	46	98
No	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Efforts Paid Off**

Almost of the graduates (98 percent) thought their hard work had paid off, but 3 out of the 60 graduates commented that their finances still caused concern. The reasons they provided were both professional --learning skills, more opportunities, receiving pay and promotions; and personal --their increased self-esteem and confidence, and pride in their independence (See Table 14).

Professional advancement was a key factor:

*"Daycare is always an option. I can open my own business, and my finances have improved."*

*"The parents are confident of the good care I will give their child."*

*"Without a degree I could not have a position as a case-manager."*

Some graduates revealed their pride in learning:

*"I learned a lot ...I'm better at understanding everything."*

Some graduates expressed their pride on behalf of their community:

*"We make a difference in the community. We break the stereotype of Hispanics by being college grads and business owners."*

Some graduates felt all of the above:

*"To grow as an individual, and to give better services for the children I care for, as well as in the community."*

<b>Table 14.</b> <b>Efforts Paid Off</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	62	98
No	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>Reason Paid Off *</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gaining Knowledge and Skills	21	33
Increased Self-Esteem	18	28
Pay and Promotions	15	22
Positive Example	6	9
Opened Opportunities	6	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100</b>

## Conclusions

The graduates achieved their goals of attaining a degree despite considerable odds, and many additional responsibilities. They all worked many hours, most were raising children, and many were taking care of other family members, and volunteering in their communities. In addition, many struggled with a new language.

Yet, there was remarkable consensus among the 64 graduates – whether they continued with their education or not -- that they had made a good decision to attend UCB. And for those who continued their education, many felt they were academically prepared, even as they missed the supportive environment, and one-on-one attention they had received at UCB.

Although most of the graduates continued with their education, some were taking a break – either to rest, or because they could not afford the cost of college.

Most of the graduates experienced concrete improvements in their professional lives, and in their incomes; but above all, they expressed considerable satisfaction with their current employment, even if the remuneration was less than they desired. They were very clear about the positive effect their UCB experience had on their lives, their families and their communities.